INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF THE MIND

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Oral Teaching
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This oral teaching has been prepared by the Yeshe Melong Publications staff. We dedicate the merit of this publication to the health and long-life of the spiritual teachers, to the propagation of the Dharma in the world, and to the happiness, well-being, and enlightenment of all beings. May complete auspiciousness prevail!

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SECTION ONE: THE PREREQUISITES

I have been told that many lamas have come here and given extensive instructions on the preliminary practices. It seems that at this time there is a great interest in receiving teachings on the nature of the mind. I have been requested to give such a teaching so, although I don't really know how to give these teachings, because you have requested them, I will speak in brief.

First of all, I would like you to consider all sentient beings who are equal to limitless space and generate a sense of loving kindness towards all of them. Generate the wish that each and every one of them may know happiness in this life and never return to the lower realms in future lifetimes, and that gradually they may all establish the status of buddhahood. Consider that it is for this purpose that you wish to receive the teachings on the nature of the mind. Please give rise to the purest motivation of which you are capable.

In the past it was always traditional for the teacher to examine disciples and for disciples to examine the teacher. From the standpoint of the spiritual teacher, this process of examination was necessary to determine whether or not the disciples were suitable vessels to receive teachings on the nature of the mind. From the standpoint of the disciples, it was necessary to determine whether or not the teacher was qualified to truly bring benefit to the disciples. In this way, much care would be taken by both teacher and disciples to examine one another, after which a relationship would be established and the teachings would be transmitted.

These days both teacher and disciple are unable to do this. If you ask whether or not I am a truly qualified teacher of dzogchen, I am not. If I were, I would be able to see into the minds of all the disciples and know exactly whether they are ready for the teachings or not. It is only a realized being, only a buddha, who has the power to really understand the minds of others. Therefore we should consider that the teacher of dzogchen must truly be an enlightened one. In our present circumstances we can also consider, first, that the mind of all sentient beings is buddha, that all sentient beings possess the buddha nature, which is their very essence, and second, that we have all obtained the precious human rebirth. With these two things

together the teachings are allowed to be transmitted and received.

At this time, you shouldn't continue to remain in a state of ordinary perception. Rather, you should try to generate pure perception. You should understand that although the qualities of the lama are inconceivable—in fact, there is an entire volume dedicated to explaining the qualities of a pure lama—most importantly, the lama must have unmistakenly realized the primordial wisdom nature of his own mind as well as possess unfailing compassion and loving kindness for the purpose of benefitting others. The most important qualities that the disciple must have are faith and fully-endowed, fervent regard, and confidence in the teaching. In addition, the disciple must have unfailing, enthusiastic effort towards practice. Keeping these points in mind, everyone should generate pure perception, seeing one another as male and female wisdom deities, and although it is difficult to have uncontrived bodhichitta, you should try to generate bodhichitta. Now the prerequisites for the mind nature transmission are complete.

SECTION TWO: THE VIEW

The "mind nature teaching", the "practice experience", and the "meditation" are all different names for the same thing, which essentially is that all sentient beings possess the foundational buddha nature. How is it that they have come to possess this buddha nature, which is, in fact, their innate presence, their inherent essence? How is it that this is the fundamental nature of all living beings? This is what the lama reveals to the disciples in what is called the "sem tri", which is an introduction to the mind's nature. After receiving this introduction, through training and through one's ability to naturally comprehend, when one ascertains the nature as it is, this ascertainment is called "the view". The view is then the primary practice. Maintaining the view for months and years, with enthusiastic effort, is called "meditation". While one is engaged in meditation, the unfailing ability to observe one's behavior according to cause and result is called the "conduct". When view, meditation, and conduct reach their resultant stage through the effort of the practitioner, then in dependence upon the capabilities of the practitioner—be they superior, mediocre, or inferior—the corresponding result will occur. In the superior case the result will be the dharmakaya realization, in the mediocre case realization will occur at the moment of death, and so forth. The threefold practice of view, meditation, and conduct, and the results achieved thereby, are the subject of this type of mind nature teaching.

Concerning the practice of view, meditation, and conduct, what type of individual has this experience? There are two types. One is the individual who engages on the path of a scholar, which is the path of the great pandits of the past. The other is the individual who engages on the path of a practitioner, which is the path of the mahasiddhas. The approach of the scholar is known as investigative or analytical meditation. It requires a tremendous amount of listening and receiving many, many teachings on the subject of emptiness, shunyata. In-depth study of the Madhyamika, the Prajnaparamita sutras, and other important sutras that deal with the subject of identitylessness is required. Through this process the individual will come to understand that all dharmas, including samsara, nirvana, and the path, have no true, inherent existence

whatsoever and are nothing other than the nature of utter openness, or emptiness. A partial understanding will occur through this type of analytical meditation, which will eventually lead to the unmistaken realization of the non-duality of appearance and emptiness. In this experience emptiness is not apprehended as a void state of nothing. As objective appearances are seen, and sounds heard, and all other sensory phenomena are experienced by the apprehender apprehending, they are simultaneously experienced as the nature of emptiness. Nothing changes. Appearance does not become void, and voidness does not become appearance. Appearance and voidness are experienced in a state of non-duality.

When one realizes this non-duality of appearances and emptiness, there isn't any going from one to the other; there is only the one experience of the non-duality of the two. This experience is likened to a reflection seen in a mirror. We can see the reflection in the mirror very clearly, vividly, yet we know that it has no true, inherent existence. Even though it appears, it is inherently empty. The experience of the non-duality of emptiness and appearance is precisely like this. It is also very much like the dream that one had last evening. At the time of dreaming, the dream definitely was experienced, yet it had no true, inherent existence; it was merely a dream. Although one may have experienced earth, water, fire, air, and the other types of objective appearances arising, not one of them had any true, inherent existence whatsoever. Although they were experienced, and although they arose and occurred, their nature was empty.

According to the path of sutra one realizes the nature of emptiness to be the non-duality of appearance and emptiness. After that, the same understanding of non-duality is taken into the path of tantra. When one practices the generation stage mahayoga one must realize the indivisibility, or the non-duality, of the generation and the dissolution. On the path of anuyoga one must realize the indivisibility, or non-duality, of bliss and emptiness. On the path of atiyoga one must realize the indivisibility of original purity and the spontaneous accomplishment of original purity, which is also referred to as the indivisibility of awareness and emptiness. This progressive understanding serves as a basis for the dzogchen view in

that first one must realize the indivisibility of appearances and emptiness.

To understand the meaning of dzogchen, the Great Perfection, you must understand the indivisibility, the non-duality, of the nature. This understanding is realized in different ways. The way of analytical meditation on the path of sutra is one way, and even on the path of tantra, study and analytical investigation of the scriptures is necessary to come to have an understanding of the non-duality of relative and absolute truth. Initially, one must realize the all-pervasive, pure vision of phenomenal existence to be as it is. Essentially, this is the realization, the view, that the external, inanimate world is a celestial palace, a mandala, and that the animate creatures within-all living beings-are male and female embodiments of wisdom. This is called "pure perception of phenomenal existence". This pure perception is brought into union with the absolute truth of the nature of equality, which is that the nature of both what is called "good" and what is called "bad" is equal. This realization is not attained merely through hearing and contemplating; it arises through meditation, which initially is dependent upon hearing and contemplating. It is very important to have confidence in the truth of this view. Even if initially you don't realize it, at least you shouldn't have incorrect view towards it. You should have strong confidence that this is the true nature of reality.

For example, consider the case of gold mingled with iron. Initially it may seem that the gold is not pure because it is mixed in with the iron and its purity cannot be seen, but if it is separated from the iron it will be seen to have never been stained by the iron. It has always been pure. Similarly, you should see that the nature of phenomenal existence-the world and all the beings that dwell within it-is primordially pure.

If this is so, then why can't you see it now? Just as the gold can not be seen when mixed with iron, you cannot see your primordial nature because your mind is mixed with karmic afflictions and obscurations. When the conflicting emotions and their habitual propensities are cleared, you will be able to see that your primordial nature is perfectly pure and that this purity is the nature of existence and the nature of each and every one of us. The only

reason you can't see that now is due to karmic afflictions. Once the iron is removed from the gold, the gold is revealed and is seen to have never been stained by the iron. In the same way, our buddha nature, this pure, primordial wisdom nature that we all possess, has never been stained by the obscurations of the mind. It's just a matter of being able to perceive it. What we are viewing is that which is pure and has always been pure.

The practice of accumulating merit and removing obscurations and negative karmic afflictions is employed only to be able to see the pure, original nature that has always been present. Practice is not performed to transform an impure state into a pure state; this is not it at all. For example, if you try to clean a piece of black coal to make it pure and white, you will never succeed because its nature is black, or dirty, and it cannot be cleaned in that way. If one's nature were not primordially pure it would be futile to consider the view, but since that's not the case, and because one's nature is primordially pure, as soon as the obscurations are removed and one is freed from the limitations, then clearly that nature will be seen. Similarly, a conch shell is white by nature, and if it is dirtied or stained in some way, as soon as it is cleaned it will become white again. Just like that, as soon as the mind is cleared of its confusion, the pure primordial nature will surely be perceived and ascertained. When you are able to become free from the stain of dualistic grasping and clinging, through the practice of the view, meditation, and conduct, you will then realize the all-pervasive purity of phenomenal existence and that the primordial nature of each and every sentient being is that of a perfect buddha. Even if you are unable to realize this purely you should never doubt it or hold incorrect view.

One must try to maintain the view of the pure perception of phenomenal existence. However, if one has no training at all in the non-dual experience of emptiness and appearances according to the path of sutra, then it will not be possible to proceed to the path of tantra where one must be able to maintain the pure vision that all phenomena, just as they are, dwell in their primordially pure nature. One must precede the mantra path with the sutra path of coming to understand that all dharmas are of the nature of emptiness. If this is

not known it will be very difficult to know how to proceed on the path of tantra. It is very difficult to actualize the path of analytical meditation, the path practiced by the great panditas of the past. In the past, such individuals had tremendous ability to hear all of the profound teachings and put them into practice. These days, to even hear the teachings on all the scriptures and commentaries is extremely difficult and rare, not to mention being able to perform all of the corresponding practices.

The second path, the path of placement meditation, is practiced by ascetics or by those who are more inclined to simply meditate. For this path, it is not necessary to have a keen sense of wisdom knowledge and/or a tremendous amount of experience in the different practices. It is necessary to have a fully realized lama and to have fully endowed, unfailing faith and fervent regard. It is very rare to find a realized lama, and it is very rare to find a disciple who has the necessary type of unfailing faith and fervent regard for the dharma. But if these two come together, the blessings of a realized lama and a disciple whose mind is filled with unfailing faith, that conection is the perfect prerequisite for the direct introduction to the nature of the mind, intrinsic awareness.

These days it is rare to have the ideal circumstances in both cases, for analytical meditation as well as placement meditation. Nonetheless, many people have a great aspiration towards dzogchen practice. This seems to be the case everywhere and, in fact, according to the prophecy of the Buddha, this time is the ideal time for the dzogchen doctrine to be propagated. The Buddha prophesied that the dzogchen doctrine would bring maximum benefit to sentient beings during the time when the human life expectancy was between ten and sixty years. As we find that this is just about that time, one almost thinks, how did the Buddha know? How could it be so auspicious that in fact this is exactly the case? To have a strong aspiration toward the dzogchen is not only predicted, it is also a sure sign that in past lifetimes such individuals have accumulated the necessary karma, and tremendous amounts of merit, without which, upon simply hearing the dzogchen, they would immediately feel disrespect, or have incorrect view or doubt towards it. If, when one hears dzogchen, one has tremendous faith and the aspiration to

want to learn, practice, and accomplish it, then this is a definite sign that one has generated a great amount of effort in past lifetimes, efforts that are now ripening in this lifetime. This is said to be extremely auspicious, and it is due to the power of this type of good fortune that I will give the teaching. Even if you cannot actualize placement meditation just exactly as it should be, at this time, just by the power of the auspiciousness of your aspiration you qualify to receive the teachings.

When teachings are given on the union of mahamudra and atiyoga, they are usually given in the context of the basis, the path, and the result. The basis is the madhyamika, the path is mahamudra, and the result is dzogchen. When teachings are given according to the path of placement meditation, which is the nature of this teaching, then the basis is dzogchen, the path is dzogchen, and the result is dzogchen.

Basis, path, and result involve the view, meditation, and conduct. First and foremost, the view is the most important thing to establish. If it is not established, there can be no meditation. Or, if one has established an incorrect view, one's meditation will also be incorrect, or meaningless. Given this, how do we establish the view?

The view of the Great Perfection is that now, as we consider all sentient beings, we consider that they all possess the essence of the sugatas, the foundational buddha nature. This is the basis of all sentient beings. From the time of becoming a sentient being until the time of becoming a buddha, all beings possess this nature. There is no one who does not possess this nature—it is utterly all-pervasive. It is not the case that buddhas, who obviously possess this nature, are better than sentient beings, who also possess this nature but are considered not to be as good as buddhas because they are sentient beings. There is actually not even a hair's-worth of difference between a buddha and a sentient being when it comes to the buddha nature. The foundational nature possesses all of the qualities of enlightened body, speech, mind, pure qualities, and concerned activity of an enlightened being. Without exception, all of these qualities are perfected in the buddha nature.

The buddha nature is the basis, the ground. It is also referred

to as the "foundational sphere of original purity", or "emptiness". Its expression is the spontaneous accomplishment of rigpa, intrinsic awareness. The ground possesses all of the qualities of that which is buddha, and that is the nature of emptiness. The measure of its inherent radiance is the display of unobstructed primordial wisdom, pure awareness, rigpa, which is spontaneously accomplished. Rigpa is the spontaneous accomplishment of the sphere of original purity within which all of the qualities of enlightenment are perfected.

There is a difference between sutra and tantra when we consider this understanding that is called "the great emptiness". According to sutra, great emptiness is understood to be free from elaborations, and according to tantra it is understood to be exactly what was just explained. It is the foundation, or the foundational great perfection, and it is called the "Great Perfection". It is called "perfection" because it is the perfected state. Not only is it the perfected state of all of the enlightened qualities of body, speech, mind, noble qualities, and concerned activities, it is also the perfected state of pure awareness. It is the non-duality of the sphere of original purity and the display of pure awareness. It is nothing other than the perfected state of all dharmas that are of samsara and nirvana, without exception, which means that all of cyclic existence exists in the nature of rigpa. It exists in a way that it is neither refuted or abandoned, nor is it apprehended as having any inherent truth. The situation is likened to clouds in space: the clouds are samsara, and the space is rigpa. There is no need to reject the clouds, because they are not inherently a part of the space. Although they appear, they have no true, inherent existence. The situation is also likened to gold within iron. When gold and iron first came into existence they arose simultaneously, in a coemergent way. Similarly, samsara and the buddha nature exist in a coemergent way. One must understand that samsara, all that appears as cyclic existence, is exactly like the appearance of a dream. It is nothing other than the display of the absolute nature of truth, pure awareness, and it is not to be understood as being anything other than that. But when one has a dream, because of grasping to self one has the phenomena of a dream, which seems to be something other than one's self.

There are eight doors, or entrance ways, for the arising of the

spontaneous accomplishment of rigpa. At the time of the arising of the spontaneous accomplishment of rigpa, there seems to be a separation but, in fact, this separation is only the spontaneous accomplishment of the sphere of original purity. At the time when samsara and nirvana were unaccomplished, there was no distinction at all. There was just the foundational nature, dwelling within the heart, and its appearance, which is the subtle display of images and molecules of light. Then, at the time of the viewing of the molecules of light and the images, not knowing that this appearance is simply the spontaneous accomplishment of the ground, one wonders: Is this the appearance of myself, or is it the appearance of something other than myself? That moment of doubt and confusion, that moment of separation and not knowing, is the very moment the phenomena of samsara began. This was the very moment appearances were not recognized to be the display of one's own nature and were mistakenly understood to be the display of something else.

Thus, samsara comes into being due to the failure to recognize the nature of the display. However, if one recognizes the nature of the display, then through the six specific dharmas one realizes that which is Kuntuzangpo, the Primordial Buddha, which is nothing other than the nature of one's own mind. But now your experience of phenomena is like a dream. You think they are something other than yourself without realizing that they are only the play of your own pure awareness. Failing to recognize that, you have created objective appearances based on grasping to the subject. This is the only reason there is a separation, and this is how samsara has come into being.

Rigpa, the pure awareness nature of the mind, dwells in the heart. If we consider that the mind is empty, how is it that the mind dwells in the center of the heart? How is it that it has a place where it remains? According to absolute truth, the nature of all dharmas is empty, yet there is relative truth, and according to relative truth, the tantric scriptures teach that the place where the mind remains is in the body, within the central channel in the heart. The central channel is referred to as the "channel of the five primordial wisdoms". It is also referred to as the "ever-youthful vase body" or "vase presence". You must have confidence in the fact that it is

actually present within your body in the heart, in the center of the body, and that this is the place where it remains.

The nature of this mind, as has been explained, is the foundational essence of the buddhas, the buddha nature. This foundational buddha nature is the state we call "nirvana". Similar to the way that clouds appear in space, or that gold is contained within iron yet remains unaffected, or that the rays arise from the sun, samsara is accomplished within this foundational buddha nature and arises from it. Within this foundational state of original purity, all aspects, or qualities of body, speech, and mind are spontaneously accomplished. If this is so, one may wonder, then why is it that we are not able to actualize this nature if in fact it is our own nature? Why have we not been able to realize this? It is only because of the adventitious circumstance of karmic afflictions and delusions that obscure awareness of the nature in the same way that the sun in the sky is obscured by clouds. When the clouds are removed, the sun can be seen; when the obscuring afflictions and delusions are removed, the buddha nature can be seen. You might also wonder, if we possess this nature, why can't the nature itself remove the karmic afflictions? Why can't it alone clear away the karmic afflictions that are preventing us from perceiving it? Again, this situation is likened to the sun in the sky. The sun has the power to illuminate all of the darkness in this world but, in spite of this, as long as the sky is overcast, the luminosity of the sun is obstructed.

Until you have been able to absolutely actualize awareness of your primordial wisdom buddha nature, your karmic afflictions will prevent you from having a full view of your nature. Although your karmic afflictions are in no way affecting your pure awareness nature, they are creating the conditions wherein you remain unaware of it in its entirety. As long as you dwell in a state of lack of awareness, then the full magnitude of pure awareness cannot be experienced. You must believe and have utter confidence in this view of the foundational buddha nature because, unless you are able to ascertain this, the dzogchen view, you cannot realize dzogchen. You must have no doubt and your faith must be very, very pure. If you have no doubt and have pure faith, then you can be given the teachings on view, meditation, and conduct.

Now, looking at the nature, the fundamental nature, what is it? How is it perfected as it is? According to the Buddha's teachings, it has certain qualities. The Buddha taught that it is profound and that it is naturally beyond conceptualization. It is free from elaborations, it is sheer luminosity, and it is uncompounded. Machig Labdron taught that it is inexpressible, completely beyond verbalization, and that it is nothing other than the nature of the great perfection of wisdom.

To say that the nature is profound means that it has absolutely no characteristics, and therefore, it is profound. It is profoundly without characteristics and is of the nature of emptiness. Just as fire is hot and water is wet, this nature is unaccomplished: it just is. To say that it is naturally beyond conceptualization means that it has no form, no shape, no place where it remains, and no place where it goes. It just is as it is, beyond one's ability to conceptualize. It is said to be free from elaborations because it cannot be found to exist anywhere, in any way, because nothing at all can be discovered about its characteristics. Its nature is without shape or form. Yet, neither can it be found to not exist because we know that there is a mind, there is something that is always present. So it cannot be said to not exist and it cannot be said to exist; it is free from both limitations. It is free from any limitation whatsoever and from the four extremes. In addition, it is sheer luminosity because it is naturally clear and luminous. This mind is not dull or void. We know that it is omnipresent sheer luminosity and that it has a tremendous measure of clarity. It is uncompounded because it hasn't arisen from any cause or condition. It cannot be said to be in any way established or accomplished, for example, the way a crop is produced by planting seed. It is uncompounded and hasn't developed from any cause or condition. It also cannot be expressed. When we say a word like "vase", or "pillar", by hearing the sound of the word, which is the label for the thing, a mental picture arises and we are able to ascertain the thing, but we cannot express the nature in the same way. There is no way to verbalize it or express it; it must be realized as the great perfection of wisdom and only that. Thus, the Buddha taught that the essential nature possesses all of these qualities.

This nature is unborn, unobstructed, and of the nature of

space. It is said to be unborn because if we try to find the source, the place it arises from, we will eventually come to the conclusion that it has no source, that it is unborn. Yet, all the same, it is unobstructedly present. We all know that there is something, that there is a nature, an essence that is present. Because it is unborn and unobstructedly present, it is like space. From the relative point of view, we use the analogy of space because space is something that doesn't have a shape, or a color, or a particular characteristic at all. We all see space, but if we were asked to describe its qualities or characteristics, we would not really be able to say anything about it. There's nothing to be said. So like that, when a lama introduces you to the nature of your mind, rigpa, and you see rigpa, and you are able to perceive rigpa, the pure awareness nature, you cannot then say how it is that you saw it. It cannot be expressed. In this way it is like space.

The experience of rigpa is the experience of each individual who perceives his or her primordial wisdom pure awareness nature as it is. When a mute tastes brown sugar he cannot say if it is sweet or not sweet. He can't tell anyone what he is experiencing. Similarly, when you experience your primordial wisdom nature you will not be able to express it and no one can experience it for you. It is the experience of your own nature. It is called "chenpo", "great", because it pervades all that is samsara and all that is nirvana. It is utterly all-pervasive. This is the meaning of the term "dzogpa chenpo", Great Perfection.

It is extremely important to ascertain your own fundamental nature without any doubt or incorrect view whatsoever, and to understand very well how it is that it is, in fact, the innate nature of your mind. If you are able to do this, then you have correctly ascertained "the view".

This experience is also referred to as the "foundational great perfection" because when the nature is actualized as it is, in its inherent, primordial state, you will obtain the status of nirvana. To not actualize it is to be in a state of lack of awareness, marigpa, and to wander in what is called samsara, in and out of the lower and higher realms, the six classes of rebirth. If you actualize this nature as it is, and achieve what is called nirvana, the result is nothing other

than the achievement of the inconceivable bodies of the buddhas and all of the primordial wisdom qualities. The failure to be aware of it is nothing other than the six realms of cyclic existence. Everything is merely a question of whether one sees it or not. Thus, it is the foundation of samsara and nirvana. This is the main point. It is either samsara or nirvana, and this is why it is called the "foundational great perfection".

So, knowing this nature is to know the view, and to practice the view becomes the path of the Great Perfection. On the path there are many levels and stages where the qualities are utterly inconceivable. In the experience of the path, although various stages of progressive development occur they are not acquired but are primordially present. As one begins to remove the veils of ignorance, the obscurations that prevent awareness, one begins to see the primordial qualities that have always been present, and one sees them again and again until they become clearer and clearer as one keeps on practicing on the path. The practice is really a process of viewing the primordial wisdom nature more and more clearly as it becomes more and more apparent. It is like cleaning the dust from a mirror over and over again until the mirror's power becomes clearer and clearer. Or, it is like removing the clouds in the space that are obscuring the full luminosity of the sun, slowly, slowly, until the sun becomes more and more predominant. On the path, all one is doing is removing the obscurations and seeing more and more clearly the qualities that one already possesses, and actualizing those qualities. This is why it is called "dzogpa", "perfection"—because the qualities are already perfected on the path. And it is called "chenpo", "great", because of the nine great paths, or vehicles that the Buddha taught, all of which lead to the one result of buddhahood, the ultimate path, the pinnacle of them all, is the dzogchen atiyoga, the path of the Great Perfection.

The result, which is called the "resultant great perfection", occurs when the path of practice is fully perfected. At that time the primordial wisdom nature of mind has been directly perceived and fully actualized. This is not how it is when one is experiencing the view in the meditation, which is seeing, but seeing only a little of it. When the clarity of the view is enhanced to the point where it

becomes fully actualized, this is the resultant great perfection. It has been one's nature all along. The measure of its fullness is perfected. Considering then that what is fully actualized is the foundational buddha nature, that actualization is the arising of the five kayas and the five primordial wisdom qualities, as well as the arising of all the pure realms and all the manifestations of the buddhas in their inconceivable emanations beyond the limits of the mind. Every emanation of enlightened awareness arises from that ground; therefore it is called the "perfection".

It is called "great" because it is the great abandonment, it is the great realization, and it is the great accomplishment of concerned activity. The "great abandonment" means that in this state all obscurations large and small have been fully removed. Thus, the abandonment is fully endowed. It is the "great realization" because all aspects and qualities of primordial wisdom have been actualized. Thus, it is fully endowed realization. It is the "great accomplishment" of concerned activity of enlightened awareness because whatever activity is necessary to benefit others is therefore possible, be it peaceful, increasing, powerful, or wrathful. These concerned activities are fully endowed and unimpeded in the state called the "resultant great perfection".

In brief, this is the experience of the nature of emptiness, its radiant clarity, and its unobstructed compassion. When you sit in meditation, in the equipoise of the nature of the mind, that inexpressible, utterly open essence is emptiness. The measure of its radiant, natural clarity is the quality, and the nature of that quality is unobstructed compassion. Once you realize this absolute nature as it is, when you see how sentient beings have not yet realized their own nature that is no different from yours, and knowing they are still wandering in cyclic existence, the greatest sense of mercy and compassion spontaneously, effortlessly arises, and you feel that you must work for their welfare. This sense of mercy and compassion is the experience of the non-dual nature of emptiness and compassion. When emptiness is realized, great compassion is spontaneously accomplished because, in the foundational buddha nature all-pervasive compassion is the effortless quality. These three—emptiness, natural clarity, and unobstructed compassion—are the nature

of the mind.

You must truly believe that this nature is the nature of all beings, that all beings possess this nature. Believing this is the view. Whether one practices the approach of the panditas who possess great wisdom to realize the view, or the approach of the ascetics who practice placement meditation, the main point is that one's faith must be fully endowed. One must have fully-endowed faith in the three jewels of refuge at all times and in all situations. One must believe in the infallible law of cause and result. Practicing on the path of dharma, one must have firm and unwavering faith in this view. One must also perform practices to accumulate merit and remove obscurations. This must be done because, if sufficient merit is not accumulated and ones coarse obscurations are not removed, it will be extremely difficult to understand the view. Being able to see the view is dependent upon the blessings received from the lama who has realized the view, and upon one's ability to accumulate a storehouse of merit and remove great amounts of obscurations. This is done primarily by performing the preliminary practices, the ngöndro. One must be familiar with these practices and understand the need for performing them—because they are definitely necessary, particularly the practice of Vajrasattva. The One-hundred Syllable mantra must be recited at least one hundred thousand times. In eastern Tibet many of the great lamas accumulated the 100,000 Vajrasattva recitation thirteen times. One lama in eastern Tibet, and each and every one of his students, did the Vajrasattva practice, the 100,000 repetitions, twenty-five times. To see the reflection in a mirror, the mirror must be very, very clean, otherwise, the reflection won't appear clearly. Similarly, to see your buddha nature clearly you must accumulate merit and purify obscurations. Thus you will be able to realize the fundamental nature of the mind.

SECTION THREE: THE MEDITATION

The pointing out instructions that are given to help actualize the view are the instructions on the twofold practice of shamatha and vipassana—peaceful abiding and penetrative insight. After establishing the dzogchen view one will then go on to practice the method of shamatha, peaceful abiding. The word "peaceful" refers to the pacification of mental grasping and clinging, the mind of conceptual proliferations, specifically the mind of the five conflicting emotions: lack of awareness, aggression, attachment, pride, and jealousy. This also includes the pacification of thoughts of the past, present, and future, for example, constantly recalling the events of the past, anticipating what will happen in the future, and pursuing the sense fields and their objects in the present. When all of these thought generations are put to rest, the mind becomes still and peaceful. This is the meaning of "peaceful". "Abiding" means simply remaining in this state of mind without the thoughts of the three times and without any other conceptual distractions. This is the definition of "peaceful abiding".

According to the method of dzogchen, which is my own practice and tradition, the way to achieve this is to remain, naturally relaxed, in the uncontrived awareness. Now first of all, if you are in a family life situation you need to isolate yourself from your worldly activities when you are going to practice this type of meditation. Whatever activities you have planned should be completed so that when you are ready to practice there will be nothing to distract you. When you sit down to practice you don't get up again to do something else. You sit and practice; that is what you do and nothing else. You put everything else aside. In the past, practitioners would retreat to isolated mountain retreats in caves or other types of isolated environments to practice so that they wouldn't be distracted by anything. But these days, as you are householders in the world, in family situations, and probably won't be able to go out into the wilderness somewhere, you can practice in a quiet room in your home, a place where you can be isolated right in your own environment. Then, as I already said, you must put aside all of your activities. Prepare a comfortable seat, sit down, make yourself comfortable, and allow the mind to relax. You should feel very good

about where you are sitting and the mind should be happy and wanting to perform the practice. Then you should place your body in the seven-point posture of Buddha Vairochana.

The sitting posture is important because the body must be very straight when you are meditating. If the body is straight the channels will be straight. If the channels are straight the movement of the wind, the air, will flow freely. And if the wind, the air, is able to move freely and unobstructedly throughout the body, then the essential fluids will also be able to flow evenly throughout the body. Each is dependent upon the other. The channels, the wind, and the essential fluid are all very much dependent upon one's physical posture; this is one of the reasons why the posture is important. The other reason is that the posture alone has the power to purify negative karma and obscurations. The straight posture causes the central channel, uma, and the two side channels to its right and left, roma and kyangma, to become very straight and erect. The twenty-one knots that usually are obstructing the movement of air are then untied, and the air is able to proceed evenly, into and through the wisdom channels. With it, the air brings the essential fluids so that the essential fluid, specifically the white bodhichitta essence fluid, is distributed evenly throughout the body, which causes the mind to become peaceful. In this way, the mind is very much dependent on the physical body when one is seated in meditation.

Once you have assumed the proper position, you then allow the mind to simply relax in its natural place. Whatever arises, be it the concepts of the three times or whatever, you needn't do anything about it. Neither obstruct it nor react to it. Just allow it to be as it is, and it will naturally dissolve into its own place. This is the way to practice the shamatha, the peaceful abiding meditation, according to dzogchen. It is the best, the superior practice of peaceful abiding, and if you can perform it in this way, you should certainly do so.

If you cannot practice the peaceful abiding in this way, remaining in the natural place, you may use the mahamudra approach, which is to use a support for the mind. That support for the mind can be an image or the movement of air. For instance, you can put a stone or a stick as a support in front and then focus the mind

upon it. Or you can use an image of the Buddha, which is also very good to use, and you can practice by focussing on the different parts of the Buddha's presence—like the crown bump, or the navel, or the endless knot in the heart, or the dharma wheels on the Buddha's body, or the entire body at once. You should focus on one specific part of the body until you have achieved the ability to remain with single-pointed awareness on that part. Then you should move to another part of the Buddha's body and focus on that part, and then move on to the next, and so on. Finally, you should focus on the entire body at once. And while you are focussing you shouldn't have any distracted thoughts. This technique of using an image of the Buddha as a support is called the nirmanakaya peaceful abiding technique.

You may also visualize an image of Buddha Vajrasattva as a mental support, visualizing it to be about the size of your thumb joint. Or you may visualize the dharmakaya buddha Kuntuzangpo. Another method is to draw the Tibetan syllable AH and use that as a mental support by placing it in the space in front. In the beginning you can use a medium-sized syllable AH. In eastern Tibet, many of the lamas who performed this meditation would first draw it quite large, and as they became more adept in the meditation they would draw it smaller and smaller. It is said that at first, as the mind is not in control, it is easier to captivate the attention of the mind with a large mental support. After one has made some progress and has more mental control, then a smaller support can be used. Gradually the AH would be drawn smaller and smaller until only a small one would be necessary. Some lamas would practice for seven successive days, or twenty-one successive days, or even for an entire month, doing nothing but simply gazing at the syllable AH in the space in front.

Another method is to hold a mala in your hand and observe the exhalations and inhalations that occur in a natural breathing state. You are not counting each breath with the mala but you are using it to help maintain awareness of the breath as it goes out and comes back in, one bead for each cycle of inhalation and exhalation. Just being barely aware of moving the beads, without any mental wandering you simply observe the motion of the breath. All of these

methods are called "peaceful abiding methods with characteristics". The "peaceful abiding method without characteristic" is simply to remain in the equipoise of the nature of emptiness free from elaborations, limitations, or the conceptualizing intellect. Of these various methods, you can choose whichever method you have an affinity for.

In the practice of peaceful abiding one will progress through different levels of development. It is kind of like going to school, where you proceed from first grade to second grade to third grade and so on, up to the higher grades. Dharma practice is just like this. Ordinarily, this type of mind nature teaching would not be given until one had already passed through the different levels of peaceful abiding practice and accomplished them but, according to your wishes, I am teaching it all now. Therefore, as you have requested the teachings, and as I have introduced you to some of the different techniques for peaceful abiding practice, and as this is a practice that must be accomplished, you should choose the method you want to practice and practice it on your own level.

Now, going back to the technique called "relaxing in the natural state", if you are practicing this technique you must not be thinking that there is anything else you need to do, for instance, thinking "Is my mind distracted?" or "Is it not distracted?" or "I should develop faith now." or "I should make a prayer to the lama." or "I should think about pure vision." or any other such thoughts that you might want to add to the state of naturally remaining. This is all to be avoided. Even "good" dharma thoughts have no place in the natural state because, when practicing equipoise, all thoughts and contrived practices are put aside. Nothing is done other than simply remaining in the natural state as it is. This is also true for any of the other methods of peaceful abiding I have mentioned. The method isn't an end-result in and of itself; the mental support is used only to bring your mind around to the place where it can abide peacefully. In the state of peaceful abiding there are no concepts or discursive thoughts at all. One must simply remain totally relaxed, expecting nothing in that state. If you have a glass of dirty water and keep stirring it up, keeping the water agitated, it will always be dirty. If you allow the water to become still the dirt will settle and the water

will rest in its natural state.

One's experience of peaceful abiding must be very stable, which means that discursive thoughts and conceptual proliferations do not arise. Only in that state can one be introduced to rigpa, pure awareness, and that is the beginning of the experience of vipassana, penetrative insight. This is where the foundational great perfection, the view, comes in. To really understand the view, which is the nature of the mind, one must investigate to determine where the mind arises from, where it remains, and where it passes to. Since all beings, even the smallest insect, possess a mind, there must be something. We all have a mind; this is obvious. And if there is something, it follows then that it should have some type of characteristic. Where does it, or where has it, come from? From what source or place has it arisen? Has it arisen from objective appearances, from an external object? Has it arisen within one's own heap of aggregates? Has it arisen from the five elements? Has it arisen from one's body, one's flesh or organs?

It is necessary to investigate to determine from where the mind has arisen. If it has come from within one's heart, then from where exactly in the heart did it come? Where is its source? You need to investigate in this way. Look into every single place where you think the mind may have come from. With each conclusion that you come to in this process you should inform the lama, and the lama will then guide you to the next stage. But in our case, as we are not able to engage this process gradually in this way it is traditionally done, I am giving you the guidelines for your own investigation. On your own you need to examine to find the source of the mind. Try to find an answer, then work with that answer, and if it changes or gives rise to new answers, then move on and continue your investigation.

As for where the mind remains, it must be somewhere because it is the mind. Is it within, or outside the body? If it is within the body, exactly where is it in the body? In the end, if it goes, if it passes somewhere, exactly where does it go? When thoughts arise and then pass, where do they go? Do they go into a particular direction? Do they pass to the east or the south or the west or the north? Do they dissolve into the elements, into water, or fire, or earth, or air? Where do thoughts go and who stops them? Where

is the mind that stops the thought and who is the stopper? You must investigate in this way.

This practice of investigating to see where the mind arises from, where it remains, and where it goes, is an essential preliminary practice to understanding the nature of the mind. Because there is a mind, there is something. We cannot say that there is not. Because there is something, it stands to reason that we should be able to find out something about it. It must have some characteristics. Perhaps it is round or square or triangular, or perhaps it has a specific color. Once you determine what you think it is, you must establish firm conviction and confidence in your particular conclusion. And if your conclusion is that there is no mind, that the mind doesn't exist because you haven't been able to determine anything about it, then you must establish firm conviction and confidence in that conclusion.

Perhaps you think that the body and the mind are one, or perhaps you think that they are separate. If the body and the mind are one, then it follows that when the body dies the mind also must die. If the body and the mind are separate, then it follows that when the body is sick the mind won't experience the sickness—but it does. So which is it? Are the body and mind one, or are they separate? You must investigate this. Also, consider the sense organs. For example, are the eye organ and the visual consciousness, the mind, one, or are they two? Well, a corpse has eyes, and if body and mind are one then a corpse should be able to see, but this is not the case. And if body and mind are two, then in the absence of a functioning eye organ, for example when sleeping, then one should not be able to see at all, yet we do see in the dream state. In this way, you must investigate to see.

Maybe the mind is mingled with the sense organs, or maybe it's in the aggregates, in form or sound or smell or taste or touch. If you find that it's not accomplished in any of these sensory experiences, you must establish firm confidence in your conclusion, knowing without any doubt that it is exactly what you believe in. If you have come to the conclusion that the mind has a definite characteristic, for example a particular form or shape or color, then you must have full confidence in that conclusion. In this way you

must investigate, looking into this question again and again. If you have come to the conclusion that the mind is free of the four extremes—existence, non-existence, neither, or both—then you must have confidence in that conclusion.

You will ascertain the view through the process of this investigation, and once you have ascertained it you will then practice it. Understanding that the nature of the mind cannot be seen, you will come to understand the fundamental nature of the mind, the innate nature as it is. When you are able to ascertain the view, you must ascertain it with confidence and firm conviction.

If you are practicing this three-fold investigation—looking to see where the mind arises from, where it remains, and where it passes to—under the guidance of a lama, when you reach a conclusion you will inform the lama. For instance, if you have determined that the mind is a particular color, you will ask the lama if your conclusion is correct or not. If there is no lama to ask, you must ask yourself if your conclusion is correct or not. Approach your investigation from many different angles. Examine and re-examine your conclusions to determine whether they are accurate or not. Thus, proceed with the practice.

With respect to where the mind has arisen from, where it remains, and where it passes to, when you have reached the conclusion that the nature of the mind simply cannot be seen, that there is nothing you have been able to perceive about it, that there is nothing you can express about it, and that in fact you cannot really even conceive of it, and because of this you have further concluded that the mind must be empty, and you feel certain about this, then you must also examine this conclusion because, obviously, there is still this thing that we call "mind". To think that it is empty in the way that an empty pot is empty is a faulty conclusion. When you begin to see that the nature of the mind is empty, you will see that this emptiness is an utter openness within which is a luminous, unobstructed clarity. The experience of that clarity is the experience of the primordial wisdom of pure awareness. Thus, it is a mistake to conceive of the mind as being something that is void or empty in the sense of there being nothing there. Clearly it is naturally luminous.

So we can't say that the mind exists, because upon investi-

gation we find that there is nothing definite we can say about it. On the other hand, we can't say that it doesn't exist because, obviously, there is something there. And it's not possible that the mind can both exist and not exist at the same time, nor is it possible that it can both neither exist nor not exist at the same time. Ascertaining this, one becomes free from the four extremes of existence, non-existence, both, and neither, and that experience is called "penetrative insight", which is free from any limitations. "Penetrative insight" refers to the insight beyond which there is nothing else to perceive. When one has reached the point where there is really nothing more about the mind to perceive or conceive of, then one is ready to be introduced to what is called the "dissolution of the mind", which is the experience that occurs when one is in the equipoise of the natural state free from the thoughts of the three times. One has no thoughts of the past, present, or future; all discursive concepts have simply dissolved. They have disappeared into their empty place. At the precise moment that concepts dissipate, rigpa, pure awareness, is there, and that's it. There is no experience of rigpa other than that. If one were to search elsewhere for rigpa, pure awareness, the nature of the mind, one would never find it because that experience alone is the experience of rigpa. When the mind has dissolved and the experience of the primordial wisdom dharmakaya arises, that is rigpa. It will never be found in any other place. So, as for the nature of the mind that is utterly luminous and just as it is, in that very moment you should try to recognize it as such.

Lamas will often say that the mind and rigpa are not different, and because rigpa, pure awareness, is often referred to as "the cognitive state", or "the ordinary mind as it is", it sounds like rigpa and the ordinary mind are the same. However, you must clearly understand that there is a distinction, and you must understand the distinction in the use of terms so that you don't make a mistake. The nature of the mind is rigpa, pure awareness. When that which is called "mind" is arrested, when it has dissolved and is no longer present, that very moment is rigpa, pure awareness. This is the distinction between mind and rigpa. The distinction can be noted in the following way: If, in our meditation, we experience

some tightness and binding, some tension, and our experience is not totally open and expansive, then we are not remaining in rigpa—we are remaining in the mind, not in the nature of the mind.

The experience of the mind is tight and dull, sort of dark and cloudy, restricted. On the other hand, the experience of remaining in the nature of the mind is open and expansive. Rigpa is utterly sheer open luminosity. Not wavering from that nature of emptiness, the luminous clarity is unobstructedly all-pervasive. This is the nature of pure awareness. You must be able to understand this distinction.

Once you are able to remain in the nature of the mind, which is rigpa, you will first experience what is called "abiding in the nature of the mind", then the "movement of the nature of the mind", and then "awareness of both abiding and movement". You need to examine these three—abiding, movement, and awareness or observation—to see if they are separate or one. "Abiding" means abiding in the nature of the mind, and that nature is utterly open and free from discursive thoughts. "Movement" refers to the movement of the nature of the mind, and that movement is the arising of discursive thoughts. "Awareness of the abiding and the movement" is simply that. When you examine these three with awareness you will see that they are not separate, and you will come to understand that they are one and the same, just one flow. Abiding in the nature of the mind is the meditation, and, as anything and everything arises from that nature, realizing that all discursive thoughts are but the display of the nature itself is part of that meditation.

The situation is analogous to the way that waves will arise from and dissolve back into the ocean. When we remain in the nature of the mind, whatever discursive thoughts arise are immediately recognized as being simply the play or the display of the nature of the mind. So, seeing one's pure awareness nature, one sees the display arise and then dissolve right back into the place it arose from in the same way that a wave arises from and then dissolves back into the ocean. It is naturally set free. It dissolves into its original place. When we recognize that these three are one, we understand that placement is the dharmakaya, movement is the sambhogakaya, and awareness is the nirmanakaya. These three are one nature.

You must practice diligently the two sets of three: where the mind arises from, where it remains, and where it passes to, and then abiding, movement, and awareness. You must try your best to realize the nature of the mind to be empty, luminously clear, and unobstructedly compassionate. This realization is the actualization of the view, and it is also the maintenance of the view in the meditative experience. Once you have truly ascertained the view you must meditate on it. The success of your practice will depend on your ability to persevere in the maintenance of the view and the meditation.

As Je Mipham Rinpoche has said, there are two types of meditation—investigative and placement—and it is important for beginners to begin with the investigative meditation. It is necessary to actually go through the process of discovering the nature of the mind by examining, looking to see what that nature is, investigating to see if discursive thoughts are present or not, investigating over and over again to come to know what the nature is by looking at all the possibilities and eliminating all faulty conclusions. Then, once you have been able to relax in the nature as it is without wavering from that nature, you should remain in equipoise. After practicing investigative meditation for a long period of time, then you can alternate that with placement meditation. You can practice some investigative meditation and then some placement meditation, or you can remain in equipoise, which is the practice of simply remaining in the natural state without doing anything. After some time of alternating between the two, you should then practice only the placement meditation. This, in fact, is the order of practice that Je Mipham Rinpoche has advised we follow: Begin with the investigative, then move to the alternation of the two, then finally practice only the placement meditation. With such a great, realized being giving us this advice, surely we should take it to heart. Another principal point is to always remember that discursive thoughts should never be arrested intentionally, nor should they be accomplished. Without accepting or rejecting them, simply let them be.

After meditating in this way for a long time, all grasping to conceptual or objective appearances—for example, the pursuit of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch, and the pursuit of the five

conflicting emotions, i.e., hatred, attachment, and so forth—simply relaxes and subsides. It is pacified. In that state one experiences pure awareness, rigpa, Then, in meditation, there are three experiences that occur: the experiences of bliss, clarity, and no-thoughts. These experiences are like the bark that grows on a tree. One layer of bark comes and then it is shed, and then another layer comes and it too is shed, and so on. Similarly, the various experiences in rigpa continue to occur and arise in the state of equipoise. For instance, when the experience of bliss arises in your equipoise you will feel so happy, so blissful, that you will want to remain in equipoise and not do anything else. It is the best experience you have ever had. But if you become attached to that experience it becomes impure. From being an experience of rigpa it immediately becomes the impure experience of the arising or development of desire. As such, it is a fault in the practice, not a quality, and it produces the cause for wandering in cyclic existence once again. In the experience of rigpa bliss is a quality, and if it is experienced without any attachment or compulsory attraction the result is the experience of the sambhogakaya.

Clarity is also an experience that arises in rigpa, and when it occurs one experiences such complete luminosity and clarity that there is no longer any obstruction between the external and the internal. One is able to see through walls and see people at a distance who are coming from far away. Different clairvoyant qualities begin to develop, but if one becomes attached to those qualities and that experience of clarity and luminosity it all becomes the display of aggression, which is again the cause for cyclic existence. If there is no attachment, then the experience is a quality of rigpa, a quality of the meditation that will result in the nirmanakaya. You should always understand that the experiences of bliss and clarity never waver from pure awareness and are experienced within pure awareness; they are not the end result in and of themselves. If you grasp to them as the result, then again you are brought back down into the causes for cyclic existence.

Finally, if one can appreciate that the experience of no-thought is the experience of the nature of emptiness free from any limitation of mental activity, then one is producing the cause that

will result in the experience of the dharmakaya. However, when the experience of no-thought arises, if you experience it in a state of dullness, a state of delusion wherein you simply don't know what's going on, where you don't know what day it is or even whether it's day or night, a state that isn't sleep but is very deep like sleep, then you are not in rigpa either. If you grasp to this experience as being emptiness you have once again fallen under the power of delusion, which produces the causes for animal rebirth and the round of cyclic existence. So if you do not grasp to any of these three experiences in rigpa, they are the causes for the accomplishment of the three kayas. This is why you need to appreciate them for what they are and remain free from any attachment to them.

Whether your experiences in meditation are good, like the bliss, clarity, and no-thoughts, or whether they are bad, like the feeling that maybe you are doing something wrong and that your meditation is not proceeding the way it should and because of this you want to go to the lama and ask for a divination to see what's wrong, in either case you should not react to your experiences at all. It simply doesn't matter whether they are good or bad because both are just experiences in the meditation; they are not the end result. You should have neither expectation nor disappointment. Your mind should be free from both because it is meant to be free from all conflicting emotions and concepts. It is important to understand that your experiences in equipoise are just experiences; they arise and they pass and there is nothing to hope for or be disappointed in. As you maintain the meditation, which is the awareness that everything is just the display of the primordial nature, you will be able to ascertain it all in the nature of the great equality and remain in that nature of equality, free from all expectation and disappointment and all negative emotions.

As you have these experiences of bliss, clarity, and no-thoughts, they will come gradually in progressive stages, coming and going and coming back again. The great Bimalamitra has condensed the various stages, identifying five levels in the progression of experiences that arise when one is in equipoise. The first is that, during meditation, one will experience the motion of discursive thoughts being much more rampant than ever and even almost

out of control. What is actually happening is that now that one is observing the arising of the discursive thoughts, which one has never done, it just seems that there are more than ever. Actually, there are no more than there have ever been, it's just that one is more aware of them now. At this time one should pray to the guru and practice more guru yoga, and persevere in the meditation. By the blessings of the guru and perseverance in meditation, the flood of discursive thoughts will begin to relax and calm down. This will lead to the second experience, which is a feeling that something is being accomplished. It is likened to a river flowing in an empty valley that sometimes flows in the center and sometimes branches off to the side. In this experience there will sometimes be a flood of discursive thoughts and at other times there will be very few. At this time one must abandon any grasping to good or bad and simply remain with the practice and practice unceasingly. This will lead to the third experience.

Through one's diligence, one will begin to experience the meditation. Just as a person who has worked very hard will collapse with a sense of relief and sit with no thoughts at all, similarly, through perseverance in the practice one is able to remain with emptiness. This is not like the experience of no-thoughts that was described earlier because that experience of no-thoughts is not really a seeing of the nature of the mind, it is just an experience. But on this level one has penetrated deep into the nature of the mind and remains with the empty nature. This experience of meditation then leads to the fourth experience, which is placement.

In this fourth experience there is some arising of discursive thoughts, but for the most part the flow of discursive thoughts has subsided. Only occasionally will subtle thoughts arise, but they are very, very few. At this time one takes great pleasure in the practice, and with happiness is able to proceed with effortless diligence. Except for the sudden interruption of a rough condition, like a loud voice, which would cause some movement, rigpa is much stronger than the flow of discursive thoughts and it takes precedence over the arising aspect. This experience leads to the fifth experience, which is the perfection.

The experience of perfection is that nothing whatsoever is

able to penetrate, harm, or defile one's equipoise, which is stable like a mountain. Whether one is going or sitting, experiencing form, sound, smell, taste, or touch, simply doesn't matter; one has experienced the stability of equipoise, and it is unshakable and immovable. These are the five experiences. When one reaches the fifth, one's meditation is really very stable. One has achieved stability.

When one is beginning to have some accomplishment in the meditation, or achieve some stability, it is very easy to develop pride. One must be very careful about this; becoming prideful in one's accomplishment must be avoided. In fact, one should remain motionless in the three ways. On this level of practice, when one reaches the state of stability the body remains immovable, like a corpse, poised in the seven-point posture. The speech is unmoving, like a broken guitar string. All of the endless samsaric talk and stories and conversations, as well as the dharma recitations and dharma-oriented speech, have been put to rest. The mind is unmoving, like the expanse of space. It is utterly blissful and clear and open. The sensory experiences of the five sense organs are not obstructed. Without any grasping to form, sound, smell, taste, or touch, without obstructing the object or the experience, one simply remains. Just as stars appear in the ocean but do not affect the ocean, one has the experiences of the sense fields but they have no effect on the equipoise because there is no grasping or clinging to them. They are simply left in their natural state.

At this time the mind is relaxing in the natural state as it is, and there is no obstruction of discursive thoughts. Whatever arises is experienced as the play of pure awareness and is liberated in and of itself, like a snake that naturally uncoils. At this time one may also simply, nakedly, observe the arising of discursive thoughts, and in that recognition, by facing them directly they are set free. This is like recognizing someone that one knows well but hasn't met for a very long time. Simply facing the discursive thought, and recognizing it to be a discursive thought, it is immediately set free. Recognition and freedom occur simultaneously. And there is no benefit or harm to the experience; it is like a thief rushing into an empty house. Whatever arises is simply left to be as it is. There is nothing to do.

On the path of sutra it is considered that the arising of the conflicting emotions is a bad thing. They are meant to be abandoned, and to that end many methods, many antidotes, are applied to remove them. The conflicting emotions are the cause for wandering in the three realms of cyclic existence, and because of this they must be abandoned. This is the view of the sutra path. On the path of the bodhisattvas, and also in tantra, the view is that the conflicting emotions, left as they are, are the expression of delusion, yet when ascertained with the bodhichitta and awareness of emptiness they are transformed into their nature, which is the five primordial wisdoms. In dzogchen practice the conflicting emotions are left in their natural place. One simply remains in the natural state, and in the natural state, in one's own nature, conflicting emotions are liberated without having to abandon them.

To illustrate this let us use the example of a poisonous drink. According to the path of sutra, the poison is to be destroyed; one must not partake of it. On the path of the bodhisattvas, one is like a skillful doctor who takes the poison and through various methods, maybe burning it in fire or purifying it with water, transforms it into medicine. The bodhisattvas take the delusions and, with an understanding of bodhichitta and the nature of emptiness, transform them into the five wisdoms. Through that process buddhahood is gradually attained. On the path of dzogchen one uses poison in the same way that a peacock uses it. When a peacock drinks poison the poison enhances its beauty, brilliance, and power. When a dzogchen practitioner experiences the conflicting emotions, at the very moment that they are experienced, by not doing anything with them, they are naturally set free. They are used to enhance the experience of liberation.

In this way, you can consider the three poisons to be exactly the same as the three experiences of bliss, clarity, and no-thoughts, or the three kayas—sambogakaya, nirmanakaya, and dharmakaya. They are one nature. On this level of tantric practice they must be seen as one nature. You should not see the three poisons as being the bad three and the three experiences of bliss, clarity, and no-thoughts as being the good three. You must see them equally, because if you don't you will keep on seeing samsara as the bad place and nirvana

as the good place. As long as you remain trapped in duality, going back and forth between good and bad, you will fail to realize that both are accomplished in your own buddha nature and that it is all simply a matter of the difference between recognizing the nature of the mind and not recognizing it. If you recognize the nature of the mind, then you have recognized that which is nirvana; if you fail to recognize the nature of the mind, then you are experiencing that which is samsara. It is just a matter of seeing or not seeing. Therefore, you must realize the nature of equality.

At the time of experiencing the great nature of equality one will see one's lama as a living buddha. The lama who has given one the pointing out instructions, pointing out the nature of the mind, is the outer, relative lama. The inner, absolute lama is the realization of one's own pure awareness nature. When one is able to experience the inner, absolute lama, then one immediately realizes the outer lama to be a living buddha. One realizes that one's mind and the lama's mind are indivisible, are one taste. That realization is definitely a sign of accomplishment. Another sign of accomplishment is that discursive thoughts are no longer something that are arising in meditation—they are the meditation. In other words, there are no discursive thoughts, which means that there is no meditation. Meditation is self-liberated.

Gyalwa Ngugu, who was the heart disciple of Jigme Lingpa, after meditating for six years was at one time recalling the kindness of the Nyingthig lineage lamas and was so overcome by devotion that he fainted. When he was revived he was in an experience where there is no meditation and he thought that he had made a mistake. So he went to his teacher and told him of his experience. Jigme Lingpa said, "Oh, you have arrived on the level of no more meditation. You no longer need to remain with me." He then instructed Gyalwa Ngugu to go to eastern Tibet to begin his activity of liberating sentient beings and working for the welfare of others. The practice, through its own strength, reaches its own level of accomplishment, and on that level one is able to effortlessly benefit others.

SECTION FOUR: THE CONDUCT:

Now we have come to the subject of conduct, the third of the three of view, meditation, and conduct. The conduct of the mind is to not abandon the conflicting emotions but to allow them to be liberated in their own place by maintaining awareness of the mind's nature. The conduct of the body and speech is to always observe the infallible law of cause and result. In the realization of the nature of emptiness one's depth of compassion for sentient beings is so powerful and overwhelming that one feels compelled to work for the welfare of others only and to use one's body and speech only for that purpose. This is because one has realized the nature of the mind to be empty, radiantly clear, and unobstructedly compassionate. The unobstructed compassion is manifest as a living experience. It compels one to only work selflessly for the welfare of others. This type of conduct arises by its own force.

As beginners in the practice, you should be very careful to watch every detail of your karma, your conduct. As Jetsun Milarepa said, "Although one's view may be equal to the space itself, one should watch the workings of karma as minutely as counting grains of sand." You should observe every detail of your conduct with care, and you should give up the idea that now that you are a dzogchen yogi and you can kill and drink liquor and do other such things. Instead, you should couple your high view with the conduct of a shravaka, a hearer on the level of the hinayana. From the external point of view you should appear extremely honorable and careful in everything that you do. Your high view should always be joined with honorable and pure conduct.

SECTION FIVE: THE RESULT

The foundational practice, which is the view, meditation, and conduct, needs to be recognized and understood very well according to the instructions that have been given. When you sit and perform formal practices you must always precede them with the generation of bodhichitta. Take a moment to consider that you are doing this practice for the welfare and benefit of all parent sentient beings, to free them from their suffering. This is very important. Then you should do the guru yoga practice, receive the four empowerments from the guru and, after the guru dissolves into you, enter into non-conceptual awareness, which is the experience of being indivisible with the essence of the guru. This is the point in your meditation to interject the peaceful abiding and/or the penetrative insight methods that you may be practicing.

The success of your practice is entirely dependent upon your enthusiastic effort. If your effort is superior, the results will be superior. If it is mediocre, the results will be mediocre. If it is inferior, the results will be inferior. The result is totally dependent upon your ability to persevere in practice. If it is absolutely superior, then in this very lifetime, before death, you will be able to dissolve the body into light and leave no trace of it behind, which is the way that Guru Rinpoche left this world.

At the moment of death, which is called the "intermediate period of the moment of death", various stages of the dissolution of the five elements occur. Our bodies are the result of a process of the progressive development of the five elements, a process that begins at the time of conception. At the time of death we experience the same process but in reverse. At that time the inner elements that make up the body(flesh, blood, heat, breath, and consciousness) dissolve into the outer elements they arose from(earth, water, fire, air, and space).

When the element flesh dissolves into the element earth we will experience a sensation of the body being very, very heavy and feel that we are falling down, or being pulled down. We will also experience the very strong appearance of the color yellow. The next element to dissolve is the element of the blood, which dissolves into the element water. When this occurs the orifices, particularly the

nose and the mouth, become very dry and one experiences seeing mirage-like phenomena. When the element heat dissolves into the element fire, the body becomes cold and one experiences the phenomenon of flickering lights shooting out into all directions like sparks from a fire. When the element breath dissolves into the element air there are three long, drawn-out exhalations. With the third exhalation the outer breath ceases; that's the final breath. At this very point, if the dying person is aware of the death process and realizes that it has no true, inherent existence at all, that its nature is that of emptiness, and if he can just remain in the nature of the mind, pure awareness, he will be liberated in the intermediate period of the moment of death. Also, it is at this very moment that one may have the potential to dissolve the body into molecules of light, leaving nothing behind but the hair and fingernails. When this occurs the mind is in the pure realm. This is called "liberation in the intermediate period of the moment of death".

If liberation does not occur at that moment one will enter what is called the "intermediate period of intrinsic reality". At this point the consciousness is still within the body, although from the outer point of view one is pronounced dead. Externally there is no more breathing. Internally the original seed acquired from the father at the time of conception, which is located in the crown for the duration of one's life, drops down to the heart. This is the white seed, the white bodhichitta. The original seed acquired from the mother at the time of conception, the red seed, the red bodhichitta, which has been located in the navel, rises and meets the white seed in the center of the heart, where the two seeds mingle. As they mingle, the consciousness dissolves into their union and one falls into an unconscious state. This is exactly what occurred at the moment of conception when the white seed from the father and the red seed from the mother came together and the consciousness entered and dissolved into that union. The fact that this is the very moment of the separation of the consciousness from the body at death underscores the interdependent nature of cyclic existence.

If one has trained during one's lifetime, at the moment of falling into this unconscious state one will recognize that it is the experience of the absolute nature of truth, the arising of the pure

awareness nature, and one will actually perceive the foundational state of original purity. While living, the meditation experience is like the child, and this moment of experiencing the foundation of original purity at the time of death is like the mother. When you practice now to develop pure awareness, basically you are practicing for this very moment of the separation of the consciousness from the body when the foundational original purity arises In that moment of recognition, when child recognizes mother, liberation will take place and one will be set free in the intermediate period of intrinsic reality.

If one is not liberated in the intermediate period of intrinsic reality one will travel on to the next intermediate period, which is called the "intermediate period of concentration". At this time, the different pure realms will begin to arise and will become apparent. One will see the five buddhas and their vast assemblies of emanations in the center, east, south, west, and north. When each of the five buddhas appear in turn—Vairochana, Vajrasattva, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi—he will be surrounded by the other buddhas and their assemblies. From the heart of the main buddha of each direction, brilliant light rays of the same color as that buddha will radiate and will connect to light rays that radiate from one's own heart—blue,white, yellow, red, and green corresponding to the respective buddhas. As the light rays from the particular buddha's heart connect with ones own heart, if one recognizes the buddha and the nature of the light, then one will be lead to the pure realm and will be liberated at this stage in the intermediate period.

However, along with the pure, brilliant light of the buddha's emanation, a dull light of the same color will also appear. This is the light that attracts one to any of the six classes of rebirth in cyclic existence. When one sees the brilliant light of the display of the five buddhas and their assemblies, if one has some practice from this life one will recognize the buddhas and the deities, faith and fervent regard will arise spontaneously, and one will be liberated. Otherwise, if one has no practice one will not recognize and will react with fear to the brilliant light and instead be attracted to the dull light, which will appear more calming and attractive. Thus one will be lead to rebirth in one of the six realms, depending upon the particular

light one is attracted to. So if you practice now you can be liberated in this intermediate period of concentration, and that is to be liberated in the nirmanakaya state of buddhahood.

If one is unable to be liberated at this time one will wander on to the intermediate period of rebirth. When this occurs one is about to take rebirth again. The bardo experience lasts forty-nine days. When the mind separates from the body, if it is not liberated in any of the intermediate periods that arise during this time, then at the end of forty-nine days it will enter another body. For the first twenty-five days of the forty-nine-day period the mental body travelling in the intermediate state experiences its immediate past life. It recalls all of the phenomena in a similar way that it did when it was alive. It can actually see its loved ones, it can hear them, it comes around them, and it experiences all the phenomena of its recent past life. Then, after twenty-five days the experience changes to the experience of the phenomena of the immediate next life, the place where the consciousness is going to take rebirth. One will actually see and experience that place. If rebirth is going to be taken in the hell realm one will experience tremendous heat and the ground of molten lava and other similar phenomena. If one is going to take rebirth in the gods' realm one will experience flowers and very pleasant sensations. Depending upon one's karma, one will experience different phenomena in the intermediate period. If one has practiced during one's life, then at this time one will recognize what is occurring and understand that one is about to take rebirth. If not, there will be absolutely no recognition and one will be totally caught up in the phenomenal experience.

If one does have the practice and recognizes that rebirth in cyclic existence is about to occur again, then one should pray very strongly to the buddhas and remember the kindness of one's root teacher. Pray to the root teacher, remember the practices that one engaged in in the past life, and pray very strongly to not be reborn in the six classes and instead to be born in the nirmanakaya pure realm. If one's prayer is very strong, by the power of one's aspiration at this time in the intermediate period there is still a chance to have the experience of transferring to the nirmanakaya pure realm. Otherwise, if one needs to reenter the world for a specific reason, like

taking rebirth as a tulku to help sentient beings, or for whatever reason, one must pray very strongly to not enter the lower realms. One must pray to be able to meet with the dharma at birth, to be born into an excellent family, and to have no difficulty in receiving teachings and accomplishing meditation in the immediate next lifetime.

These are the different possibilities as far as the results are concerned. In the superior case, at the time of death, a person who has truly been an excellent practitioner will most certainly be able to dissolve his body into light, or, he may have the ability to shrink it down to a very small size, or, when he dies there will be many auspicious signs, such as rainbows appearing in space, or, when the body is cremated relics will be found in the ashes and other remarkable signs will occur. These are all signs of having achieved liberation, and they correspond to the resultant stage of the accomplishment of the foundational view, which is called the "foundational view of trekchöd", which is the dzogchen view.

When it comes to dharma practice, there are many inconceivable methods to be found on the paths: the inner paths of tantric practice, both the dzogchen atiyoga and the anuyoga, the practice of the illusory body, the practice of the clear light, and so forth. These are all extremely profound methods that lead to liberation. In dzogchen alone there are many methods to be found in the two cycles of trekchöd and tödgal. The possibilities that we have are absolutely inconceivable. If you want to practice then, the dharma is certainly not limited in methods. Yet, what you need to understand is that once you have begun your dharma practice, throughout the course of employing whichever of these methods you are relying on, the real result is that you should see and experience your mind becoming more peaceful and tame. The dharma exists solely for the sake of eliminating the conflicting emotions that sentient beings experience, the same conflicting emotions that are the very source of their suffering.

Once you have begun your dharma practice you should definitely experience your lack of awareness decreasing, your aggression decreasing, your pride decreasing, your attachment and desire decreasing, your jealousy and competitiveness decreasing,

and your mind becoming more peaceful and tame. These are signs of accomplishment. When you hear the dharma teachings, when you meditate, when you practice, the root of all dharma is to tame the mind. The signs of accomplishment that you think are important, like having visions of deities or attaining some kind of power, are actually not the true signs—they are just attributes. The real sign is the changing of your mind, the subsiding of the five conflicting emotions, the lessening of your attachment to samsara, the decreasing of your self-centered attitude and desire to be famous or gain profit or impress others. The true sign is that your constant attraction to the short-lived pleasures of this world decreases. If this is your experience, then you are really experiencing the signs of true dharma accomplishment. Being able to fly in space or leave your footprint in stone are signs of some siddhi, some power, but they are not signs of the ultimate result, which is nothing other than the pacification of delusion and conflicting emotions.

You need to check and see if your path of practice is producing these results or not. You should always remember that it is only this one time that you have a precious human rebirth, only now, and that is certain. This life that you have right now, this precious human rebirth with its opportunities, is the result of lifetimes of accumulating merit and purifying negative karmic obscurations. All the efforts that you made in past lifetimes, working very hard to accumulate merit and purify obscurations, have produced this precious result that you are now experiencing. But if you don't do anything with it now that you have it, then all that effort will be wasted because your good merit and fortune will be exhausted very quickly in this lifetime, and once it is exhausted there is only one place to go-back to the lower realms of existence. So you should never waste your precious human rebirth.

Understand that what you have accomplished in the past you should continue to accomplish in the present. Everything that you have done in the past you need to continue doing, even more so now, because now is the opportunity to be liberated. Only now. You must abandon all negativities and work hard to accumulate only that which is good and positive so that you never have to take rebirth in the lower realms again. If you really aspire to have compassion and

love for others, first of all you should have it for yourself. If you can't even love yourself enough to use your precious life in a meaningful way, then that is a very great shame and a very great waste.

My only wish is that you will truly practice dharma. Whether you are practicing tsa-lung-tigle, or dzogchen meditation, or OM MANI PEME HUNG Avalokiteshvara practice, practice it well, and do your best to avoid accumulating negative karma. You should never harm any being for any reason and you should abandon negative conduct. You should definitely abandon smoking cigarettes—it is a very negative thing and is harmful to your precious human body. You should eliminate all of these kinds of things that are of no use to you and only cause you harm. There is no point in doing them.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I, myself, have no experience in meditation—I am not a meditator—but I have heard many teachings from many great lamas on the view, meditation, and conduct. All that I have taught you is just talk, a brief explanation based on no experience. Don't consider me a dzogchen lama or even a teacher. I am just someone who has been talking about it. If you find it useful, then practice it, and if you don't, then forget it. I will always consider each and every one of you my special dharma friend. I cannot say that I consider you my students because I don't have the qualities of a lama but, as a dharma friend, wherever I go, if I ever meet any of you, I will feel nothing but happiness to meet you again.

We have all become dharma friends together and now we have samaya together because we have been in the same mandala. You have all received profound teachings together and, as vajra brothers and sisters, it is extremely important now to always be kind to each other. We must never be unkind to any being, but particularly we should not be unkind to a vajra brother or sister.

Finally, I hope that everyone will be able to go home just now and be very, very happy and rejoice in the opportunities that we have been able to share together.